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NATURE WINS:

A ❖ COMEDY ❖ IN ❖ FOUR ❖ ACTS,

BY

SUSA S. VANCE,

AUTHOR OF "LOIS CARROL."

FOR SEVEN CHARACTERS.

SAINT JOSEPH, MO.:
CHARLIE FASSETT'S "PLEASURE AND PROFIT" PRINTING-HOUSE.
1883.

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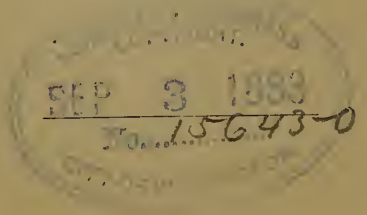

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DEDICATION.

On account of my admiration for her acting, I take the liberty of dedicating "Nature Wins" to the celebrated and talented actress, Miss Maggie Mitchell.

THE AUTHOR.

DESCRIPTION OF COSTUMES.

Mrs. Wallace—In all four acts, a Mother Hubbard dress, or any sort of plain, loose dress, swung from the shoulders.

Ivy Wallace—In first three acts, a girl's dark-blue sailor-suit. No ornamentation. Plain, country hat. Hair short, dishevelled and curly, or in two long braids hanging down the back. In the fourth act, a long-trailed fashionable dress.

Louise Arlington—In three acts, a long-trailed fashionable dress. In second act, a handsome bonnet, trimmed with lace and flowers.

Mr. Leath—In all four acts, costume of old-fashioned, eccentric gentleman.

Frank Wallace—In all four acts, plain suit of a young country gentleman.

Kenneth Arlington—In three acts, elegant costume of a city gentleman, but not a "dude."

John Wallace—Long iron-gray beard and hair; strange, outlandish costume of a man who has been out of the world, on an island, among savages, seventeen years. An old sailor's suit might do.

NATURE WINS.

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS.

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Mrs. Mildred Wallace, a supposed widow.
Ivy Wallace, her daughter.
Frank Wallace, her son.
Paul Leath, Mrs. Wallace's brother—an old bachelor.
John Wallace, shipwrecked husband.
Kenneth Arlington, } Brother and sister, and cousins of
Louise Arlington, } the Wallaces.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*A Lawn, with trees and country house, chairs, &c.*

Mr. Leath (*walking stage slowly*). That sister of mine is the brightest woman in America to-day. She is a wonderful, wonderful woman. She has some *rather* queer ideas of her own, but withal a clear, fine mind. In fact, she has brains (*touching his forehead*) like a man. She would not thank me for the comparison, however. Ha, ha!

Enter Mrs. Wallace (*in time to hear the last sentence*).

Mrs. Wallace. No, brother, I don't like the comparison. Don't say that I have brains like a *man,* but like a *woman.* That is the better compliment. You are the only man in the world that I like, and you have some qualities that are

too good for a man. You must have inherited them from your mother. Men are mostly selfish, conceited, overbearing, stingy, and given over to self-gratification. Not that they show these fine traits to each other, but to their womenfolk—to those they have at their mercy. (*Walks about restlessly at back of stage.*)

Mr. L. There she goes, off on her hobby, but *I* don't mind it. She is a woman of splendid heart, in spite of it, and wonderful mind.

Mrs. W. (*coming to front*). Brother, I wonder you haven't tired of this monotonous, country life, long ago—of our strict seclusion, and of my peculiar theories.

Mr. L. No, sister; I have considered it a great priviledge to have the constant companionship of a woman of your superior intellect. You know I have never been able to forget the romance of my youth. After Heaven claimed the object of my affections, I only felt desirous of leading a quiet, retired life, and, thanks to you and your interesting children, it has not proved a lonely or a useless one.

Mrs. W. Indeed it has not, brother. Oh, if there were only more men like you in the world! What should we have done without you? It would have been almost impossible for me to have carried out my ideas in educating my children without your assistance. You have been a father to them; and together we have kept their minds unsullied from the world. (*Mr. L. sits.*)

Mr. L. I have helped you educate them, Mildred, with all my heart, and they have grown as dear to me as if they were my own; but I have only been a passive instrument in assisting you to keep them so entirely ignorant of the ways of the world. You have never altogether convinced me of the wisdom of rearing them to manhood and womanhood in this hermit-like fashion. Frank is now nearly a man, and Ivy nearly a woman; yet, they are unsophisticated as babes in long clothes. You must surely begin to realize that this cannot last. It was all well enough while they were children, but how is it possible to continue it? That is the question I should think you would ask yourself a dozen times a day.

Mrs. W. It was only possible to keep Frank in this sort of retirement, and utter ignorance of the ways of the world, until time for him to go to college. That time has about arrived; he is twenty years old. I have only secluded him and kept from him all sentimental books, for Ivy's sake.

It would not have mattered about the boy, but for his association with the girl. I do not wish to stand in the way of his marrying when the time comes, because it will be to his advantage. According to my theory, it is better for all men to marry, but worse for all women. Woman is man's natural victim. She seems to be made for his pleasure and her own discomfort, as much as some of the lower animals, who drag out a laborious existence, entirely for the purpose of administering to the wants of man. I have wondered if this could have been the intention of an all-wise and all-merciful God, or if men have made it so through their superior brute-strength, which enabled them to do injustice to those weaker physically, but equal mentally. If my son can find a girl who has no better sense than to marry him, I shall not make the slightest objection. I think that every girl who has a good home, is a fool to unite herself to some man she fancies at the time she is very much in love with, for his pleasure and her own misery. If he be rich, she may experience the shame of being generously reminded, a dozen times a day, of what his money has done for her; and if he be poor—well, it is all very well to talk about "the joy of sharing poverty with one she loves," but when it comes down to the stern reality, it means often to be the one to do the manual labor around his house, while he goes to his office or store to gain a livelihood by the exercise of his *lordly brain,* and keeps his aristocratic hands white and soft, and free from all signs of poverty. It means to black his boots while he reads his newspapers, to almost faint over a hot cook-stove, to prepare my lord's dinner, while he sits in an easy chair and leisurely copies his brief. It means to sit up all night nursing sick children, while my lord takes the rest *he* is bound to have under any circumstances, unless he be ill himself, and then the whole household must be up to minister to *his* wants. It means, too often, the breaking down of constitution under the maternal and domestic cares, and hard labor of the woman who attempts, unaided, to do the work of a household. I have known many husbands who have seen their wives die thus, by inches, who were well able, financially, to keep a house full of servants. But they are afraid, these selfish brutes, that they will be a little curtailed in fine cigars and liquors, or might have to give up their horses and buggies. Better gradually and slowly murder the delicate wife, and have her out of the way. It is easy enough to get another. I say it with shame for our sex, that wives are so easily won.

Mr. L. Ah, sister, you look only upon the dark side. You pick out the evil examples. There are some happy marriages. With all due respect for your remarkably fine judgment, I must say that I think you are naturally influenced by your own sad experience.

Mrs. W. Perhaps so, brother, to some extent; but I also get my opinions from observation. I have known a great many married couples, but the happy ones have been like angels' visits, "few and far between." A thoroughly congenial married couple should be secured by Barnum, and exhibited as one of the greatest curiosities of the age. I shall exert every energy of my mind to prevent my daughter from ever becoming the wife, or in other words, the *slave* of any man. I'd rather see her dead and in her coffin—would rather see her in her shroud than in bridal robes.

Mr. L. Oh, sister, sister, your are using strong language.

Mrs. W. That is why I have so studiously kept from her all knowledge of the ways of the world; have lived in the country, and have avoided our very neighbors, to prevent her associating with other young people; have taught her the sciences and languages, but have absolutely prevented her reading anything sentimental. Of course, when she is a grown woman, I must let her become familiar with the standard romance writers and poets, to complete her education. But first, I wish to have her character fully formed, and have her thoroughly imbued with a dislike for men, and alive to the danger of the allurements of merely poetical fancy. Most girls marry because they learn from sentimental novels that it is a fine thing. They should be pitied for their credulity. (*Ivy heard approaching from without, and whistling or singing.*)

Mr. L. There comes our dear girl. She enters like a ray of sunshine. I don't exactly like the idea of keeping her like a nun, always, Mildred, and guarding her in this hermitage, merely to gladden our old hearts; for you know I don't altogether share your opinions, with all due respect for your superior intellect; but your experiment in training her, so far, has made of her the most unique and refreshing little morsel of humanity I ever saw.

(*Enter Ivy,* L., *whistling or singing, with her hat and hands full of flowers. Throws hat on bench.*)

Ivy. I have found the dear old uncle, and mother, at last, who seem to have forgotten entirely that this is my birthday. (*Kisses each.*) What makes you look so serious, mother, dear? Your face is flushed with excitement.

Mrs. W. Oh, it is nothing, dear child. I am happy in remembering with you that this is the anniversary of your birth.

Mr. L. And how old are you now? About fourteen, I think.

Ivy. Fourteen! Why, uncle, the idea of your forgetting my age. Look what a big girl I am! I am seventeen to-day; and I begin to think that I'm a dreadfully rough, wild thing ~~of~~ my age. Perhaps I ought to be more like a *woman* now —ought I not, mother?

Mrs. W. (*startled*). A woman! What nonsense you are talking, child. You will not be a woman for several years yet; and, in the meantime, I want you to enjoy your wild, free life to its fullest extent—to run and jump and skip and drink in this health-giving, glorious country air, and take as much pleasure as ever in your country sports—in hunting your birds' nests, in fishing and horseback riding, and in your many pets.

Ivy. Oh, I shall always love my pets, my flowers, and my pony; but, mother, I don't care as much as I used for hunting birds' nests and wild fruit, for playing ball, and those kinds of childish things.

Mrs. W. They are not too childish for you, Ivy, you are nothing but a child. They give you healthful exercise, when not at your studies.

Ivy. Let me tell you what brother heard a few days ago. While out hunting he stopped at a farm house, and—

Mrs. W. Stopped at a farm house! I told him never to do such a thing!

Ivy. It was only at the door, mother, to ask for a drink of water. He said he was so thirsty, and while drinking, a young girl, not so old as I, ran across the lawn, singing and whistling, and her mother called her and scolded her for being so noisy and rude; telling her to be more quiet and lady-like.

Mrs. W. Quiet and lady-like! What conventional nonsense. That mother must have been narrow minded and stupid, my dear. We like to hear your voice ring out joyfully all over the place, Ivy, and if we like it, it is right for you to be as gay and noisy as you please.

Mr. L. (*rising*). Since this is your birthday, Ivy, I don't know of a better way that I could celebrate it than by going with you for a ride.

Ivy. (*clapping her hands*). Oh, uncle, how delightful that will be! You don't go with me often, now. (*Kisses and swings him around by the arms, and whistles or sings.*)

Mr. L. There, there; you forget that my old arms are getting rheumatic. Let go, you little witch. (*Exit* L. E.)

Mrs. W. Ivy, what have you been doing with yourself the last hour or so?

Ivy. Why, I thought as this was my birthday, mother, and we had holiday from studies, I would be as gay, and do as many extravagant and ridiculous things as I pleased; so I went to hunt my pet pig from the herd, and tie a blue ribbon on his neck. He has grown so, and become so wild, that he hardly knew me. He was dreadfully dirty, too. I was determined to have him clean, so the blue ribbon would not look inappropriate, so I tolled him along down to the bridge and rolled him in. He likes a muddy puddle, but he didn't like the clear, cold water. Ha, ha. ha! He squealed and ran away from me in the most injured way. I think his feelings were dreadfully hurt. But at last I brought him back with some ears of corn, and had an opportunity to tie the blue ribbon on.

Mrs. W. He very much resembles many bipeds of the male gender. They usually only need self-interest as a bait to attract them.

Ivy. Are most men very selfish, mother?

Mrs. W. Terribly selfish, my dear. Your uncle and your brother are exceptions to the general rule, you know. I hope if your brother ever marries he will not be very unkind to his wife. I should feel sorry for her.

Ivy. I don't think my good brother could ever be unkind to any one, mother. Is it not a pity all men are not like him?

Mrs. W. It is, indeed, my dear. That is just what I said of my brother a while ago.

Ivy. (*timidly*). If most men are so bad, mother, and so unkind, why don't the women make them remain single?

Mrs. W. Because most women are fools, my child. Intelligent persons in this world are greatly in the minority. Women remind me of flies—we see them deliberately go into the spider's web over and over again.

Ivy. Now that's *curious*, isn't it?

Mrs. W. If young girls knew as well as we old women do, what selfish and despotic and contemptible creatures men are, they would remain with their kind and loving

mothers. A mother rarely ever tires of her own child, or neglects or deserts her. Girls should cling to their mothers as long as life lasts; for they will never find anybody to love them as the mother does.

Ivy. (*timidly and hesitatingly*). I was asking uncle some questions the other day, and one was, why all people didn't stay single as he was; and he said he supposed it was because they didn't have any fathers and mothers, or brothers and sisters, or uncles and aunts, or nieces and nephews, and they get lonesome and so they get married.

Mrs. W. Then if they are that lonesome, they should not make fools of themselves, but should travel over the world and see the sights and the great works of art. That is what you and I shall do some day, Ivy, when you are older and your brother is at college. It would not be hard to induce your uncle to take a trip with us. He would probably have gone when he and I inherited our fortune, at the death of our father, but that he could not bring himself to leave us.

(*Enter Mr. L.*, L. E.)

Mr. L. Now, Ivy, the horses are ready, and we shall have a nice ride. (*Mrs. Wallace takes hat from bench, arranges it on Ivy's head and then kisses her—both standing at back of stage.*)

Mr. L. What a remarkably sensible women my sister is, to so completely disregard fashion. Not many women would be strong-minded enough to dress as she does. Most of them would rig their seventeen-year-old daughters up in ridiculous, long riding-habits. Both she and Ivy are innocent of whalebones and crinolines.

(*Enter Frank Wallace*, L. E.)

Frank. Going for a ride, Ivy? Uncle, this letter has just arrived for you. A letter is a sort of curiosity among us, isn't it?

Mr. L. In other words, my boy, you would like to know what this one contains. Perhaps I can satisfy you. (*Opens letter and reads it.*) Mildred, this comes from our cousin, Emma Arlington. You know I met her when on my last business trip. She insisted on taking me to her house, and overwhelmed me with kindness, as well as with questions about you, and protestations that her old friendship for you was as warm as ever. She seemed to deeply feel what she called your neglect of her of late years. You remember I told you on my return what a happy couple she and her

husband seemed to be, and of her two fine children—a young man and a young lady. In this letter she informs me that she is sending them on a visit to us.

Frank. A visit from a young lady!

Mr. L. Exactly.

Ivy. A visit from a young man!

Mr. L. That's what he seemed to be.

Mrs. W. What audacity, to disturb our privacy in this way, without invitation!

Mr. L. Not entirely without invitation, Mildred. Emma hinted very strongly to me that she would like to send them—said they had never been in the country, and how delighted she would be to know your children, and have you know hers. So, of course, I said I should be delighted—that is, I mean I tried not to seem impolite, and said she ought to send them some time. She writes that they will arrive on the fourth of this month.

All the others. That is to-day!

Mrs. W. Great heavens! what can I do?

Mr. L. I don't see that anybody can do anything but me; and what I have to do is to get out the old carriage and go to the station for them, when the train is due, in about an hour. I believe there is something you can do, too. Mildred. You can have some rooms made ready for them, and you can be the noble hostess that you knew so well how to be in old times, and give them a kind welcome. That will do more toward making them comfortable, than soft beds and a well-laden table.

Mrs. W. This interferes terribly with my plans. I cannot help feeling extremely vexed; and yet, for their mother's sake, I must make them welcome.

Mr. L. I am sure, sister, that a woman of your superior mind can arise to the emergency, and suppress your annoyance sufficiently to be kind to them. Besides, our young cousins are charming, and you will probably like them for themselves.

Mrs. W. Even for their mother's sake, I could hardly like a foppish city beau, and a fashionable young lady, who are about to disturb our quiet life, and probably initiate my children into worldly and frivolous, or sentimental, views of life; but I shall compel myself to be polite them.

Mr. L. Ivy, our ride will have to be postponed till some other day, because I shall have to go immediately to the station. (*Exit*, L. E.)

Frank. Mother, there are some questions I should like to ask you, which have long been puzzling my mind. There must have been some distressing experience in your past life, that has saddened you very much, and separated you from all your old friends.

Ivy. Yes; you have never talked to us of this cousin, Mrs. Arlington, who seems to have been so dear a friend to you, and who so deeply regrets your neglect of her.

Frank. There was one still nearer to us of whom you never speak. Will you not now tell us of our father?

Ivy. Yes; do tell us of our father. Would he not also have loved us if he had lived?

Mrs. W. (*coldly*). It was hardly in his nature to love any one but himself. (*All sit.*)

Ivy. How was it you married so cold and selfish a man?

Mrs. W. Oh, he was loving enough in our courtship days. All men *are* when they are trying to *win* a wife. They make many promises "to always love and cherish the one who is dearer to them than life," to use their own hypocritical phrase; when the truth *is*, that one can hardly be depended on, after marriage, to lose a single night's sleep to save the life of a wife who is ill. (*Turning to Ivy.*) Men know how to to make love charmingly; they can talk like angels, and act like brutes.

Frank. But will you tell us of your own married life, mother?

Mrs. W. Yes; it is time you both should know now, and I shall give you my history as briefly as possible, as it is an extremely painful subject to me. I would like to say as little as possible that is harsh of your father. When I became engaged to him, my father (a very wealthy man) so seriously objected to the match, that he threatened to disown me if I married Mr. Wallace; but I was young, foolish and romantic, and was so much in love with him, that I could not see his faults. These consisted in a want of practical sense, and a cold selfishness, which absorbed him completely in his own theories. He was by taste and education an enthusiastic astronomer, but by inheritance, a cotton planter. He owned a small plantation in Louisiana, on the Mississippi river. We were married secretly, one day while out walking, and left the city immediately, to avoid my father's anger. We lived four years after that on my husband's plantation, and he seemed for a while to to be making an effort to cultivate his neglected lands.

His heart was not in his work, however, and he spent hours and hours in poring over his books and studying his favorite science. He had neglected most of his other studies for it while at college. As somewhat of an excuse for his treatment of me, I must say, that after long years of thinking over the subject, I have come to the conclusion that he was not altogether sane. His love for astronomy amounted to a passion, a monomania, that completely absorbed his mind and took it off every other subject. He had no taste, whatever, for farming, and grew more tired of it, and my protests against his neglect of all means of giving us a support. As he neglected his land more and more, we had to give up the very comforts of life, and I did heavy work that I was totally unfitted for, as I had been reared in luxury.

Frank. Could he sit by with folded hands and see his delicately nurtured wife do manual labor?

Mrs. W. Oh, he seemed to be unconscious of it. Frank, you were born a year after our marriage. Sometimes, when I felt almost too weak to walk across the floor, I was obliged to cultivate the garden with my own hands, milk cows, cook, and do all such work, while my husband sat in his study with his books and instruments, and writing lectures, with which he expected to make a living.

Ivy. My poor mother; is it possible you had to suffer so!

Mrs. W. After my second child was born, he left me alone to struggle for existence, while he went about delivering lectures on astronomy, and making just barely enough to support himself; at least he did not send me a cent. After he left, I took the farm into my own hands, and rented most of it, thereby gaining enough to support myself and children, without needing to work so hard; for, at times, I feared it was breaking my constitution terribly. Occasionally, when it was on his direct route, your father came to see us, but took hardly any interest in his family. The last time he came there, he was exultant over a letter he had just received, asking him to join a government expedition to some island in a distant part of the globe, to make an important astronomical observation. He had accepted the offer, and was enthusiastic over what he called the rare privilege. While he was with us, one of those disastrous overflows of the river came upon us so suddenly that we were obliged to flee to a hovel on the only high ground within miles of us. An old colored man and his wife lived in a part of it. There you were born, Ivy, amid surroundings

more fit to usher in the life of the poorest peasant child, than my rich father's grandchild. I shall tell you very briefly of the privations we endured there, because any long description of it would be too painful for both of us.

Frank. Did my father make no effort to go in a boat to procure comforts for you?

Mrs. W. No. His chief anxiety was to get away in time not to miss his expedition. I had three children then, and if it had not been for the assistance of the old colored couple, we should almost have starved.

Ivy. I can hardly believe it possible that we had such a heartless father.

Mrs. W. I had thought that it would be impossible for him to leave us in our forlorn condition, when the time came; but, shortly after we arrived at our place of refuge, he sent, by a man in a passing boat, a letter to my brother, Paul Leath, telling him to come and take charge of us.

Ivy. Had you never written to your father for assistance?

Mrs. W. No; I knew his cold and unforgiving nature too well. My brother was in business and making a good living for himself, but I shrank from exposing my husband's faults even to him.

Ivy. Oh, mother, how I wish we had been old enough to help you, instead of being a burden.

Mrs. W. Although my children were a care to me, contradictory as it may seem, they were the only joy of my life. I could not help still clinging to my husband. My affection for him had not all perished, and his intention to leave us as we were then situated, was breaking my heart. The land was covered with the pitiless, brown waters of the Mississippi for miles around us, with the exception of the high ground on which the negro cabin was built. We were living entirely upon the bounty of the kind colored couple, but the woman was so aged that she could give me very little assistance in caring for my children. I implored, even prayed my husband not to leave us, but he thought it foolish of me to wish to make him miss the astronomical expedition—what he called "the grand opportunity of his life." When Ivy was ten days old, he left us, and the last time I ever saw him was through a mist of tears, when he disappeared in his little boat, like a tiny speck, far off upon the waters.

Ivy. (*sadly*). He left us?

Frank. I was in hopes he would have relented at the last moment—that the helplessness of his family would have appealed to even *his* heart.

Mrs. W. My grief threw me into a fever, and I was delirous for days. On recovering, I missed from the room my little two-year-old girl—your sister Alice. She was a beautiful child—the very idol of my heart—and I called for her to be brought to me. I cannot tell you how overwhelmed I was with horror and misery, when they pointed through the window to a little freshly made grave. My little darling had gone from me while I was unconscious. She had probably died from want of attention.

(*A pause, during which Mrs. Wallace, Frank and Ivy are overcome with emotion, and John Wallace is seen creeping from behind a tree. He comes up behind the others unperceived, looks curiously at each of them, and then returns to the tree.*)

Mrs. W. My terrible grief would have driven me insane, if I had not been compelled to make a powerful effort to control it, for the sake of the two children I had left.

Ivy. It is too painful for you, mother, to be obliged to refer to this horrible time of your life. Let us imagine the rest. Our uncle came for you, thank God, and took you to a comfortable home.

Mrs. W. Yes, he has been the best brother woman ever had.

Ivy. And so, you see, in place of one heartless man, God gave us another noble one. I fancy it is so all over the world. For every bad man, may there not be a good one?

Frank. Yes, it is hardly just or fair, because of your own sad experience, to think the great majority of men bad. You have not told us of our father's death. Did it occur while he was abroad?

Mrs. W. I have never known anything positively about it. The ship on which he sailed for home must have gone down in a storm. It was never heard of after it was spoken by a certain steamer in mid-ocean.

Ivy. Dear mother, Frank and I will do our best to make your life a happy one now. Come; let us go and gather flowers, and dress up the old house, to make it bright for our cousins.

Curtain.

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE—*A country drawing-room.*

(*Enter the four young cousins. Come down, Ivy,* R. C., *Louise,* L. C., *Frank,* R., *Kenneth,* L.

Ivy. How jolly it is to have cousins to come and visit us. We never did have any company before.

Louise. Never in your lives?

Ivy. No; never since I can remember. When we first came to this neighborhood I was a baby, and people called on us; but mother excused herself to every one, till they became offended—our old cook says—and ceased coming.

Frank. Did you come on the steam-cars?

Louise. Why, certainly.

Ivy. We never saw the steam-cars.

Louise. How strange! You don't know how glorious it is, then, to fly through the air at the rate of forty miles an hour.

Ivy, Is that what makes you look so slender about the waist?

Louise. No, you odd child; that is because my dress is tight-fitting.

Ivy. Mother and I wear our dresses loose. She says it is healthy to have the weight of one's clothes swung from the shoulders. Uncle says mother is a sensible woman, and the least frivolous one he ever saw. Are you frivolous?

Louise (*surprised, but laughing*). I hope not. (*Turns toward her brother. Ivy examines Louise's long train very curiously, smoothing it with her hands.*)

Kenneth (*aside*). She is as innocent and uncultured as the calves and the lambs.

Frank (*aside*). I wonder if all young ladies are as pretty as my Cousin Louise!

Ivy. I say, Cousin Louise, what do you call this part of your dress hanging on the floor?

Louise. That is my train.

Ivy, Why, it must be terribly in your way. How do you manage when you want to climb a tree for apples, or cherries, or for blossoms?

Louise (*horrified*). Climb a tree! That is something I never did in my life.

Frank. How odd!

Louise. Young ladies don't climb trees, except when brought up exclusively in the country.

Ivy. And did you never ride on horseback!

Louise. No, never.

Frank. And did *you* never ride on horseback, Kenneth?

Ken. No; I suppose I should be ashamed to say I never mounted a horse in my life.

Ivy. Aren't they ignorant, Frank?

Frank. Yes; but we'll have to teach them.

Ivy. Oh, that will be fun (*clapping her hands*). We'll show these city cousins what good sport is!

Frank. Can you shoot a pistol, Kenneth!

Ken. (*indifferently*). Oh, I suppose I could, but I never tried it.

Ivy. Brother and I are real good shots.

Louise. What! a girl shoot a pistols.

Ivy. Yes indeed; uncle taught us, so that we can hit the mark every time. He says no lady's education should be considered complete until she learns to shoot well; and above all, to swim.

Ken. (*surprised*). Can you swim?

Ivy. I can that. You should see me strike out into deep water (*makes motions with her arms*). I think it the best sport in the world—better even than skating.

Louise. Can you skate on ice?

Ivy. Yes; where else should I skate—on the ploughed fields? (*Laughs.*)

Louise. No; but on parlor skates, in the house. *I* can do *that.*

Ivy. I never saw any parlor skates, but I should think all the fun would be lacking, if you were not out in the open air.

Ken. (*to Ivy*). So you can swim, can you, you strange little country girl?

Ivy. Yes indeed; and I would not take a million dollars for the fun I have in the water. We have a fine, big creek, with some deep holes in it, and bathing suits. We'll teach you both to swim; won't we, Frank?

Frank. Yes; I'll teach Cousin Louise.

Louise. I thank you very much, I'm sure, but I'd rather be a spectator. I'm afraid of the water.

Ivy (*laughing at Louise*). Oh, what a coward! I'll teach Cousin Kenneth, though.

Ken. Thank you; I'd be very glad. Every man and woman, too, ought to know how to swim, Perhaps we shall be able to persuade my sister to venture.

Frank. There are two things that I have not been able to teach my sister, though. She has gone hunting with me, and fishing with me, but she makes neither a good hunter nor fisherman. She is too pitiful. She wants to throw all the fishes back in the water before they die, and she hides her face, so as not to see the little squirrels and birds shot.

Ivy. Yes; that seems too cruel.

Ken. (*aside*). She has some womanliness after all. I thought her sweet face could not belong to a thoroughly manish girl.

Ivy. But I tell you what I love to do—to seine for fishes, and keep them in a tiny pond to themselves, for pets. That is, I *used* to think it fun, but brother laughs at me now, and says it is too childish for a big girl.

Frank. Yes; such a good Latin, German, and French scholar as she is, ought to give up such childish play.

Ken. You study something else, then, besides shooting and fishing and horseback riding.

Ivy. Yes, mother and uncle make us study hard, too. How far are you advanced in Latin, Cousin Louise?

Louise (*ashamed*). I never studied Latin.

Ivy. Why, what do city people learn?

Louise. We go to school and study till we can pass our examinations and get our diplomas.

Ivy. Diplomas! Oh, mother told me they did not amount to a row of pins.

Louise. And then we come out in society.

Ivy. How do you do that? I never learned that.

Louise (*with patronizing tone*). Of course not. People have no society in the backwoods. In summer, we go to lawn parties, on excursions, and to picnics. Did you ever go to picnics?

Frank. No, never.

Louise. Oh, how much you have missed. And in winter, we go sleighing and to parties. Can either of you dance?

Frank and Ivy. Dance! No. (*Looking ashamed.*)

Louise (*turning to her brother*). Just think of it, Kenneth, they don't know how to dance! I think one's education is hardly finished unless one goes to dancing-school. It teaches a woman to be graceful.

Ken. (*lightly*). I rather think it does. We shall have to teach them. I will teach Cousin Ivy, and you teach Frank.

Ivy and Frank. Thank you; we'd like to learn.

Ken. This is the way. (*Takes his sister in his arms and whirls away in a waltz*).

Ivy. It is lovely, and *yet,* it looks *rather* ridiculous, *too.* But if young ladies have to learn it, I'd like for you to teach me. Mother never told us about it.

Frank. It is beautiful. Do teach me, Cousin Louise. (*He takes Louise in his arms and dances with her rather awkardly.*)

Louise. It will not be hard to teach you. (*Shows him steps at back of stage.*)

Ken. Now, Cousin Ivy. (*Holds out his arms for her. She starts to place herself in his arms, but hesitates, looks at him and blushes, and then shrinks back.*)

Ken. (*still holding out his arms*). Come!

Ivy. No, I can't. (*Hesitates.*) Here, take my hands and we will dance so. (*They join hands and dance. When the dance is over, all come forward. One or more songs may be introduced here. Frank,* L., *Kenneth,* L. C., *Ivy and Louise,* C.)

Ken. We shall have to take several mornings and teach you to dance.

Louise. Another pleasure we have, Ivy is going shopping.

Ivy. What is that?

Louise. Going about from shop to shop, buying materials for our dresses.

Ivy. Oh, dear! how strangely you talk about things—so differently from mother. She says that is terribly tiresome. She goes fifteen miles to the nearest city to buy our clothes, and always comes back tired out. I have asked to go with her, but she always said it would give me unnecessary fatigue.

Louise. I think it great fun. I wouldn't have *any*body do my shopping for me.

Ivy. I should think you would require a great deal of dry goods, if you put so much of it on the ground in that funny thing you call your train.

(*Enter Mr. Leath and Mrs. Wallace,* R. D. *Come down, Mr. L.,* R., *Mrs. W.,* R. C.)

Mrs. W. When I met you a while ago, Kenneth, I was very much struck with your likeness to your mother.

Ken. I am glad you think so. She has talked to us often of her intimate friendship with you.

Mr. L. Have our rural children been entertaining you, or is it hard for you to find anything in common to talk about?

Mrs. W. I must beg of you and Louise, Kenneth, not to teach my children to be too worldly. I have purposely brought them up in the country entirely, far from all the

fashion and nonsense of the world, and wish them to remain quite unsophisticated for some time to come.

(*During the foregoing conversation, Ivy so greatly admires Louise's train that she takes table-cover from table,* C. F., *pins it on her own dress, so as to make a train, and takes Louise's lace handkerchief, places it on her own head with hair pins, in such a way as to form an airy bonnet. Louise, seeing the pantomime, comes to her assistance, and takes bunch of roses from vase on the table, and pins it on the side of Ivy's improvised bonnet. Ivy struts the stage, looking back at her train, delighted.*)

Mrs. W. (*perceiving Ivy*). Oh Ivy, how can you?

Ivy. I want to look like Louise, mother. See what a beautiful, long dress she is wearing.

Mrs. W. (*aside*). I fear that she is already becoming demoralized.

Louise. It is human nature, Cousin Mildred, for young ladies to like some adornment. I heard a magnificent preacher say once in a sermon, that there was something lacking in a true woman's nature if she did not like to array herself becomingly.

Mrs. W. My opinion of young ladies who are given over to fashion is that they are very frivolous.

Louise. But, Cousin Mildred, a young lady may be a genuine, thoughtful woman and, and far from given over to fashion, and yet like to dress becomingly, from an artistic love of the beautiful, and a general sense of the fitness of things.

Mrs. W. Don't put such ideas into Ivy's head. She is only a child yet.

Ivy. I must be nearly as old as Louise, mother. How old are you, Louise? I am seventeen to-day.

Louise. I am just eighteen.

Ivy. And what a grown-up young lady you are! Mother, I would look nice and grown, too, if I had on pretty things like hers. Oh, isn't it splendid to be a young lady! (*Struts about, looking at her table-cover train.*)

Mrs. W. (*aside*). This will never do!

Ivy. Mother, do let me be grown-up and wear long dresses. It must be glorious to go to parties! (*All laugh.*)

Ken. Louise has had some lovers since she came out, but I don't think she has lost her heart yet.

Ivy. Lovers! Is that something pretty to wear? I must have some of that, too. Tell me about it, Cousin Kenneth.

Ken. Certainly.

Frank. Well, come; he can tell you out on the lawn. We are going to practice pistol shooting. (*All go out* L. D., *but Mrs. Wallace.*)

Mrs. W. This is horrible! Come back, Ivy! (*Ivy, who is just leaving after the others, returns*). It distresses me, Ivy, to see you growing like these city cousins.

Ivy. But aren't they splendid? I didn't know city people were so nice. Now, Louise is the finest creature I ever saw. She is prettier than the red-birds.

Mrs. W. She looks more like a peacock with that ridiculous trail, and here you are aping it.

Ivy (*looking ruefully at her table-cover train*). But, mother, you must confess that the *young man* is lovely. I thought all young men were like my brother Frank, but this one is far prettier. There is a light in his eyes, when he looks you squarely in the face, that is beautiful. He wanted to take me in his arms and dance, but somehow I couldn't. It seemed so strange. It could not have been wrong, though, because Louise danced so with my brother. Kenneth took my hands while we danced; and oh, how it did make my fingers tingle. It was like touching that electric battery you have.

Mrs. W. Ivy, come immediately to your room and pack your trunk. You and I are going away on this evening's train.

Ivy. And leave these beautiful, sweet cousins?

Mrs. W. Yes; your uncle and Frank can entertain them.

(*A pistol shot is heard from without, followed by screams from Louise. Enter Mr. Leath,* L. D.)

Mr. L. Sister, Kenneth has accidentally shot himself. Let us tie up his wound the best we can and send quickly for a doctor. I think it is only a slight wound in the arm.

(*Enter Kenneth,* L. D., *with Frank supporting him on one side and Louise on the other. Kenneth sits on sofa.*)

Ivy (*seating herself on the other end of sofa*). Oh, do let me help him in some way. Lean on me, Cousin Kenneth.

(*Kenneth stretches himself out on sofa, with his head resting in Ivy's lap or arms.*)

Curtain.

END OF SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE—*A lawn with country house visible on the left. One chair and a sort of out-door sofa. Ivy is sitting in chair,* C. *Louise and Frank are standing* R. C.

Louise. Since Kenneth rested so well all last night, and is better to-day. could we not walk about a little? This quaint old country place is something entirely new to me.

Frank. I shall be delighted to show you all the pretty walks. (*Louise takes his arm, and they start off, leaving Ivy.*)

Ivy. I say, Cousin Louise, is it the fashion in the city for only *two* walk at a time?

Louise. It is customary for young people to go in couples. (*Start off again; but, on second thought, turn once more, still holding arms.*) Will you come with us, Ivy?

Ivy, No, thank you; it would not do to go contrary to the custom. (*They start off once more. Turn again.*)

Frank. Ivy, we would like to have you walk with us.

Ivy. No doubt you are both very anxious to have me; but I wouldn't spoil a *couple* for the world. I'd rather sit here (*seats herself on bench. Frank and Louise disappear,* R.), where I can see Kenneth's window. I wonder *why* I love to watch his window? Before yeste.day, that window was the same to me as all the others in the house; but now, it has a peculiar and wonderful charm. I hope he will soon be well. I feel quite sure he must be different from the sort of men mother has known, and far nobler and better. (*Ivy sings a ballad.*)

Ken. (*appearing at window*). Thanks, Ivy; I have enjoyed the serenade.

Ivy. Go back to your sofa, Cousin Kenneth. You should not stir about.

Ken. Will you come in and read to me?

Ivy. Yes; directly. (*Kenneth disappears. Ivy, still sitting, continues to hum the air of her song. John Wallace is seen approaching slowly from the back. Comes before Ivy. She screams at the sudden sight of him.*)

Mr. Wallace (R. C.). Hush! you will alarm the household.

Ivy (*rising*). Who are you, sir?

Wal. You need not be afraid of a poor old man like me. I wish I had a daughter like you. It would take away the horror of death if I could die in her arms.

Ivy. Why, how strangely you talk, sir.

Wal. Perhaps I may seem a little wild to you. Your mother is a misanthrope, is she not?

Ivy. What right have you to discuss my mother?

Wal. I had a daughter like you, and that is why I take an interest in you. I knew your mother years ago. She has many fine traits of character, but she has made a mistake in trying to bring up her daughter to be a man hater. If the man ever comes, young lady, whose voice is music to your ears, whose presence brings a glow of delight to your cheeks, and whom you have every reason to believe to be an noble man, do not renounce, for any one's whims, your birthright to happiness in this world. You have the right to choose for yourself whether you shall marry or remain single all your life.

Ivy. Mother says an old maid's life is the happiest in the world.

Wal. An old maid's life is often so unhappy and lonely that she is obliged to resort to nursing dogs and cats upon her lap, instead of the little children that should be there. I have seen many lonely old maids, and many happy wives and mothers. One should not judge of all human life by one's own narrow experience. The drunken man believes every one else to be intoxicated; but that does not make it true. I have had a very sad life, but I hope you will have a bright one.

Ivy. Thank you, sir. I suspect there must be some peculiar reason why you should take such interest in me.

Wal. Yes; there is, Ivy. I am very feeble; I have not long to live, and there is no one to take an interest in me. Would you be kind and pitiful to me? I know you have a good heart.

Ivy. I feel very sorry for you, sir.

Wal. Do you, dear? Do you, my little Ivy? (*Puts his arms about her. Ivy screams and struggles. Kenneth rushes from the house, with his left arm in a sling. With his right hand he catches hold of the old man and pulls him away from Ivy.*

Ken. What do you mean, old man, by this behavior? Who is he, Ivy?

Ivy. I do not know. I never saw him before.

Wal. I mean no harm, sir. I am weak and ill. I thought she would be kind to me.

Ivy. Poor old man! Perhaps he has no relative in the world.

Wal. I am all alone. I had a wife and three children once.

Ivy. Did your wife die?

Wal. No; she is still living.

Ivy Did she leave you?

Wal. No; I left her, and this is my punishment. I am ill, and shall probably die alone. (*Totters toward a seat. Kenneth assists him, and he sits.*)

Ken. (*to Ivy*). He must be insane. His eyes have a strange, wild look. He may have wandered off from his friends.

(*Enter Mrs. Wallace and Mr. Leath,* L., *and Frank and Louise,* R.)

Mrs. W. I thought I heard some one scream. Why, Kenneth, you will aggravate your wound by stirring about. It is very imprudent. Who is the stranger?

Ivy. Oh, mother, he is a poor old, helpless man, who says that he has no friends. I feel so sorry for him; but at first I was frightened and screamed.

Mrs. W. (*to Wal.*). Have yo no home, sir?

Wal. No; I long ago forfeited all claims to my home. I had a wife and three children; but I was a scientist, so so absorbed in my studies that I was unconscious of the cold, selfish way in which I was neglecting my family. I was an enthusiast—a monomaniac—men said. I did not appreciate the blessings Fate had strewn in my path. You think me mad now? No; my mind is now clear, and I understand all; but *then* I was mad, and craving for knowledge that could not bless me as the domestic happiness I might have had for the wishing.

Ken. Human beings are rarely satisfied. Men are every day throwing away jewels and going in search of stones.

Wal. That was just my case, young man. I had a lovely wife, who left a luxurious home for me; who worked for me without a murmur while I studied in idleness; and who bore three children during the four years of our married life.

Ivy. Why, that sounds like my mother!

Wal. God pity your mother, then, young lady. I left my wife and children in such a helpless condition that one of the little ones died. Ingrate, and heartless, selfish fool that I was, I could find it in my heart to go away to a foreign country to seek my fortune. But I was not as selfish as I seemed. I was thinking always of those I had left at home, and hoping to make a name by which I could gain them a fortune.

Frank. That sounds like my father!

Wal. Your father must have been a wretched man, then, young man. In a few months I started to return home. To make a long story short, the ship in which I sailed encountered a furious storm, and went down. I was found clinging to a plank, by some savages, picked up, and taken to their village, in, I know not, what wild country. They made me their slave, and put upon me such heavy work that my constitution became entirely broken.

Mrs. W. And how long did you live among them?

Wal. Sixteen years and a half. My hands are hardened and horny from labor. After watching and waiting all those long, weary years, for a chance to escape, a ship passed near us one morning. I signaled her, and was taken up. On returning to my native land, I searched out my family.

Mr. L. You found them! They are living!

Wal. Yes, they are living, but almost dead to me. I did not wish to shock my wife by a too sudden appearance. I lingered around her house for a glimpse of her and my children. I saw them one day sitting under the trees, and heard her giving them her history.

Louise. It sounds like a romance.

Wal. She told them of my coldness, of my neglect, and desertion of her, but she did not make me one-tenth as bad as I had painted myself during all those years I spent in a savage land.

Mrs. W. Oh, God! it is my husband!

Wal. I could not go away without speaking to my daughter, for I hoped her young and tender heart would have some pity—perhaps, some love for me. Was I not right, Ivy? (*Mrs. Wallace is overcome with emotion, and hides her face in her hands.*)

Ivy (*falling on her knees beside his chair and embracing him*). Oh, father—my poor father! Indeed you were right.

Wal. And you forgive me for leaving you fatherless all these years?

Ivy. Yes, father. It was not your fault that you were kept by the savages all these sixteen years.

Wal. And Frank, can you make friends with me, in what is, perhaps, my last hour?

Frank (*taking his hand*). Yes, father, with all my heart.

Wal. Mildred (*Mrs. Wallace raises her head and gazes at him*), I dare not ask your forgiveness. I do not deserve it. Our two children can be my mediators. You love them and may do what they ask.

Mrs. W. If I have entertained any hard feelings, John, all these years, they are softened now by the realization

that your health is so broken, and that you are prematurely aged. It makes my heart ache to think of the terrible life you have lead. (*She goes to Mr. Wallace. He arises and they embrace.*)

Mrs. W. Oh, brother, come quickly! He seems faint. (*Mr. Leath and Frank assist Mr. Wallace to a sofa, which Kenneth wheels forward, while Louise runs and fetches a pillow. The old man is placed gently upon the sofa.*)

Wal. I am growing weak.

Ivy (*sitting beside him on the sofa*). Oh, father, we will love and nurse you so well that you will soon be strong again.

Wal. I fear not, my little girl. My eyes are growing dim. (*Stretches out his hands.*) Mildred, where are you?

Mrs. W. (*falling on her knees beside him and taking his hands*). Here I am, John.

Ivy. See! he has fainted. (*Mrs. Wallace bends her head over his hands. Mr. Leath leans over Mr. Wallace and touches his forehead.*)

Mr. L. No; he has not fainted. His poor, weary spirit has passed away. (*Tableau.*)

Curtain.

END OF THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*Country drawing-room. Frank Wallace and Louise Arlington are seated on a sofa,* C.

Frank. Do you know, Cousin Louise, that I like you better than anybody in the world?

Louise. Why, Frank! Better than your mother and sister, whom you have known all your life?

Frank. Well, no (*embarrassed*); I don't hardly like you as well as I do them, because my mother and sister have been kind to me all my life. It would be ungrateful of me, would it not, to like any one as well as I do them.

Louise (*disappointed*). Y-e-s, I suppose it would.

Frank (*still embarrassed*). Yes, I like my mother better than anybody in the world.

Louise (*teasingly*). *Why,* Cousin Frank; you just now said that you liked me better than anybody!

Frank (*looking at her lovingly*). I didn't mean it though. I don't *like* you at all.

Louise. Don't like me! What do you mean, sir, by being so contradictory?

Frank (*sheepishly*). I don't like you, Louise, because I *love* you better than anybody in the world.

Louise. Ah! better than your good mother?

Frank (*very much embarrassed*). Yes, that is—I'm extremely fond of *her*—but I don't get all in a tremble when she comes near me, and she doesn't give me rush of blood to the head as you do.

Louise. Then I must affect you very strangely and unpleasantly.

Frank. Yes you do (*Seeing Louise start*)—that is, I mean—no you don't. What I am trying to say is, that I am in heaven when with you.

Louise (*teasingly*). I shouldn't think it would be very heavenly to have a rush of blood to the head.

Frank. Oh, but it is, though.

Louise (*demurely*). Is that so?

Frank (*summoning up courage enough to put his face down close to hers, and taking her hand*). Yes; that sort is. (*She looks at him and then looks away; he looks at her and then looks away. Then both look at each other*).

Frank. Well?

Louise. Well, go on.

Frank. Go on? Go on with what?

Louise. With what you have got to say, of course.

Frank. But I haven't got anything to say.

Louise (*drawing away from him and going apart*). He's the queerest lover I ever saw. He stops right in the middle of his love-making, and says there is nothing more to say. I can't help being fond of the boy; his very peculiarities attract me.

Frank (*taking chair a little apart. Aside*). I wonder why she doesn't tell me whether she loves me.

Louise (*aside*). I have a great mind to make love to him. Perhaps he expects it. (*Aloud.*) I say, Cousin Frank, what makes you look so dejected.

Frank (*rising*). Because you haven't told me whether you love *me.*

Louise. Why, you haven't asked me.

Frank. So I haven't. But then, I told *you* I loved *you,* without any asking.

Louise. It isn't the lady's place to ask.

Frank. Well, Louise, will you not make allowances for me? You know how my mother has brought us up in such strict seclusion. I know nothing of the ways of the world.

I only know that I love you with all my heart and soul. I know my love for you is very different from that I have for my mother and sister. I am happy when with you, and unhappy when away from you.

Louise (*aside*). Oh, how ingenious and natural he is. His love is entirely sincere. It is not a thing born of the imagination and nourished on sentimental novels and flirtations. (*Aloud.*) Cousin Frank, I have read in novels how people make love, and have had a few suitors myself. I know more about it than you do. Suppose we reverse the general order of things, and I will do the talking, you playing the part of the lady, and merely answering.

Frank (*heartily*). Agreed! That will suit exactly.

Louise. Now, to begin: I have an important communication to make to you, Cousin Frank, which has been on my my mind some time. It is something which immensely concerns my happiness, and I cannot longer endure this suspense. (*Clasps her hands to her heart, tragically.*) I love you madly, devotedly!

Frank (*excitedly, and clasping her in his arms*). Oh, do you, Louise?

Louise (*disengaging herself*). Don't, Frank; you are playing the lady, and ladies do not do that. It is my place to clasp you in my arms.

Frank. Oh, do!

Louise. No; that would not be proper even if I were the gentleman; because I would first have to learn whether you loved me, and then obtain your consent to our marriage.

Frank (*excitedly*). Our marriage!

Louise. Certainly; what would be the use in loving you, or asking yon to love me, if I didn't intend to ask you to marry me. (*Aside.*) That's business!

Frank. Why, yes—that's true. That means that we shall always be together. Oh, Louise, we will be married, won't we? (*Takes her hand.*)

Louise. Some day, perhaps; but there are others to consult. We have to obtain the consent of our parents.

(*Enter Mr. Leath,* R. D.)

Mr. L. Oh! Ah! I see that I am not wanted here. I shall retire.

Louise. No; don't go; we want you to come in.

Mr. L. Yes; no doubt, you want me very much, indeed.

Frank. We really do want you, uncle. I have some glorious news to tell you.

Mr. L. Has Louise taught you to dance.

Frank. She has taught me something better than that. She has taught me to love her better than anything in the world.

Mr. L. Of course I am very much surprised. Of course I have been blind during the last five weeks. It's human nature, and my sister, with all due deference to her superior intellect, can't fight against that. Put a given number of young people, evenly divided as to sex, in a country house, for several weeks, and there is almost certain to be some love making. I congratulate you both. You had just asked Louise to marry you, had you, my boy? (*Rubbing his hands.*)

Frank. No; I hadn't asked her to marry me.

Mr. L. Well, you were just about to when I interrupted you. You had just asked her, then, if she loved you, if I may be so inquisitive?

Louise (*laughing*). No, he hadn't asked me that, either.

Mr. L. The mischief! I came in entirely too soon, then. What do you mean, sir? Did you call me in to do your love making for you?

Louise. No, Cousin Paul; I generously helped him out of the difficulty, when I found that he didn't know how himself.

Frank. What we would like for you to do, uncle, is to break the news to my mother.

Mr. L. Hum! The dickens you do? That's the hardest task of all. Now, I might easily have helped you out of the other difficulty. I could have made love to the young lady for you, and been glad of the chance. (*Kisses Louise.*) But as to this other matter (*scratching his head*)—my sister is a very determined woman in her opinions and plans. She is a very superior woman; but with all due deference to her superior intellect, I do not agree with her in all her theories. They are too much against nature. However, we will go out and find a cool, shady place and talk it over. (*Frank takes Louise's arm to lead her out.*) I sha'n't help you a bit, Frank, I swear, if you are so impolite to me. (*Puts Frank aside, takes Louise's arm and they exeunt* L. D., *Frank walking out after them.*)

(*Enter Ivy and Kenneth,* R. D.)

Ken. Where did you get your trained dress, Ivy? Has your mother relented in her notions about the fashions?

Ivy. No; Louise lent me this, and I had a curiosity to see how it would be. It must be human nature, Kenneth, for young ladies to somewhat like dress.

Ken. Yes, doubtless; but remember this, my dear little cousin: that a novice in any line is liable to go to extremes. Having been brought up something like a nun in a convent, you were enthusiastic in your first admiration of dress. That is the danger of being too strict with young people; it is an almost inevitable result that they will go to extremes when the restraint is finally and suddenly removed. Here lies the great danger of "total abstinence" from liquor. The worst drunkards I have ever seen, have been men who never knew the taste of liquor till they were over twenty-one. I knew, Ivy, when we first came, that your sudden liking for fashion was merely on account of the novelty of the thing. Your fine mind and good heart, I am sure, will teach you to make love of dress subservient to your true womanly characteristics.

Ivy. You teach me so many wise things, Kenneth, or rather you teach me to *think* and form opinions for myself. You seem quite well again, Cousin Kenneth. Your arm never pains you now?

Ken. No, not at all. As for my illness, I have rather enjoyed it, because it has kept me near you.

Ivy. Five minutes before you were wounded, mother had told me that I must come immediately to my room to pack my trunk for a journey. She was going to take me away, and leave you and Louise with uncle and Frank.

Ken. Why did she intend doing that?

Ivy. Because she was afraid I would learn from you and Louise to be worldly and frivolous and what she calls sentimental nonsense.

Ken. Your mother's life was a sad one.

Ivy. Yes, very sad. That is why she has determined that I shall never marry. She has talked to me a great deal about it lately. She says love is all imaginary and silly, and that marriages are generally unhappy.

Ken. Your mother is a noble woman, Ivy; but her own sad experience has warped her mind on that subject. Even your father's return and sad death seemed to make no impression upon her fixed opinions. Love is of God, or why should all human beings have it in their hearts and feel exalted thereby. Her judgment is at fault, when she attempts to control such impulses in her daughter. She would make of your life a dreary matter of calculation, and try to stultify the sweetest tendencies of your nature.

Ivy. I am sure Tennyson, in this little book you have lent me, tells of true love, so as to make it attractive, indeed. He

has quite converted me to the belief that it is not all imaginary.

Ken. I have learned of its truth in the last five weeks, since I have been here with you, Ivy.

Ivy (*starting violently*). With me! (*Rises and comes front, very much agitated and trembling perceptibly. Placing her hand upon her heart, in loud whisper.*) With me?

Ken. Yes, with you, Ivy. Wounding my arm was a happy accident, because it prevented your mother from taking you away from me. (*Kenneth comes forward and tries to look in her face. She hides her face from him and trembles perceptibly.*) What is the matter, dear child? Why do you tremble so? (*Takes one of her hands.*)

Ivy. I think I have a chill.

Ken. No; your hand is burning.

Ivy. Well, it is fever then. Let me go. (*Tries to run away, but he takes both her hands and holds her.*)

Ken. No, Ivy; it is the tumultuous beating of your own heart, because you have just learned the greatest lesson life can teach. *I* have only learned really what love means since I have known you. I had heard of it often, and read of it, but only thought it idle talk, or the silly vaporings of sentimental novelists. Now I *know* what it means.

(*Enter Mrs. Wallace,* R. D., *with looks of dismay and horror, on perceiving Kenneth holding Ivy's hands and leaning over her.*)

Mrs. W. (*aside*). My God! What I feared has come! (*In severe tones.*) Ivy, go to your room. [*Exit Ivy,* R. D.] Kenneth, before you were wounded, I intended taking Ivy away immediately, but stayed to nurse you. You know perfectly well what my fear was. You ill repay our kindness by making love to my daughter.

Ken. I thought the best way to show gratitude was by loving people, cousin.

Mrs. W. Under the circumstances, Kenneth, your speech is extremely impertinent. You are behaving very wickedly to flirt with her.

Ken. I could die a thousand deaths before I could intend any harm to her, madam. I love her too well. My dearest wish is for her happiness.

Mrs. W. What right have you to entertain any *dear* wishes in relation to my daughter, sir? You are merely a passing acquaintance, whom she has known for a few weeks—a good-looking cousin, who has visited us for awhile,

but who will go away to-morrow, and she will forget you in the course of another week.

Ken. I hope not. I almost flatter myself that she will never forget me. I will trust my case in her hands.

Mrs. W. You speak with the conceit and self-assurance pertaining to all young men. But I forgive that. I know men too well not to know it is born in them. *They* can't help it. I suppose it will be necessary to tell you flatly, that I intend my daughter to remain single all her life—to keep her with me always; not through my own selfish love, but for her best happiness. No man can ever love her as I do, and I do not believe marriage is for a woman's best good.

Ken. I disagree with you entirely in your opinion, cousin. However, might ~~you~~ your be able to control her life through her obedience to your wishes, you cannot control her heart. In this case, it is most certainly true that "man, or rather woman, proposes, and God disposes."

Mrs. W. What do you mean?

Ken. That the Divine Being, who is working through all the laws of nature, has already kindled a spark of love in her heart.

Mrs. W. God forbid that you should have stolen my child's heart from me! I should consider it the most sinful robbery. But, surely, surely she has not been captivated by your idle love-making. She has not been foolish enough to tell you that she loved you. Ivy is a sensible girl.

Ken. No, she has not told me so in words, but my love for her has taught me to read her eyes. I believe she is far from indifferent to me.

Mrs. W. There your natural man's conceit crops out again. I implore you, Kenneth, not to take advantage of Ivy's youth, to put such ideas into her head. She is only a child of seventeen!

Kenneth. Children of seventeen sometimes know their minds pretty well.

Mrs. W. I intend that she shall remain a child for many years to come. I shall do my utmost to save her from such a fate as marriage. I want you to leave us to-morrow, Kenneth. Ivy will soon forget you, even if she should be a *little* interested now. But we shall arrange matters more definately after I have talked with her.

Kenneth. My only wish is that you should do what is for Ivy's best good. But my idea of happiness and yours are quite different. [*Exit,* L. D.]

Mrs. W. Yes; my ideas used to be like yours when *I* was a young fool. He is a noble young fellow, though he selfishly wants to take my child from me. I must confess the boy has a silver tongue; he reminds me of his mother, whom I loved so well. If I wished Ivy to marry, he would be my very choice. I must manage her with great policy, and not seem too harsh. (*Sits.*)

(*Enter Ivy, pale and agitated,* R. D.)

Mrs. W. Child, where did you get that long-trained, ridiculous thing you have on?

Ivy. It is one of Louise's dresses she lent me.

Mrs. W. The sister tries to fill your head full of frivolous notions of fashion, and the brother tries to corrupt your heart.

Ivy. No, no, Mother; he is too noble, too whole-souled, too generous, to have an evil thought.

Mrs. W. Ah, indeed! Why don't you use every grand adjective in the English language to describe him? Now, I look upon him as a selfish young man, who is ready for pastime to make love to the first nice looking girl he meets, and perhaps get her silly mind interested in him, and then to go away and forget her in a few days, or at least weeks.

Ivy (*vehemently*). No; I am sure he could not do that.

Mrs. W. Could not go away and forget you? (*Ivy is silent and abashed.*) Foolish child, I know men better than you do. Fortunately, I know best what is for your good. I have just told Kenneth to leave this place to-morrow morning. After the first few days, he will never think of his little country cousin again, and surely the pains I have taken to train you to use your reason against all sentimental nonsense, will teach you to think calmly of him as a mere passing acquaintance, whom you will never see again.

Ivy. Oh, no; he must not go! I cannot *live* without him.

Mrs. W. Why, Ivy, is it possible that this is my sensible little girl, who was only a child yesterday?

Ivy. Mother, I am no longer a child. I am a woman.

Mrs. W. And you are ready to forsake the mother who has been all in all to you for the last seventeen years, for a lover of five weeks?

Ivy. Oh, mother, don't talk so; it will break my heart. (*Kneels and lays her arms upon her mother's lap.*) My heart is large enough for you both. If you doubt my love for you, tell me to give him up, and I will do as you bid me, though

it kill me. Mother, can you be cruel enough to part us forever? (*Bows her head in her hands.*)

Mrs. W. (*aside*). Oh, heaven! what can I say to her? Even though she leave the decision with me, since it has come to this, it is hard to pronounce a sentence that may wound her, I know not how much. (*Aloud.*) You may well bow your head with shame, Ivy. I am amazed that you should be so wildly fascinated with this stranger.

Ivy (*lifting her head proudly*). You use the wrong word when you say shame, mother. I am proud of this love. It so exalts me that I feel as though it were the very voice of the omniscient God whispering in my heart. It *must* be pure and noble.

Mrs. W. (*rising and speaking aside*). All my intended sarcasm fails me. I cannot answer such words.

Ivy (*rising*). Mother, your life with my father was a very sad one; but your regret that you ever married seems to me a sort of contradiction. Suppose you had remained single; your parents passed away long before old age came to you, as was natural, and would have left you with only a brother to care for. If he had married, as might also have been natural, had reared a family, and there had been no appropriate niche for you to fill in his family circle; if he had been too much absorbed with the cares and joys of his own immediate relations, to give you many thoughts or much affection, think what a lonely, hard and unloving life you would have passed in your childless old age. Such a life might be mine some day in the future, when my brother is married and absorbed in his own family. Would you condemn me to such lonliness, and to forever stifle the cravings of maternal love, that will creep into the heart of every maiden, though she be as pure as the angels, because God has intended it so, and it is one of his eternal laws? Surely, your children have been a great joy to you, and have repaid you tenfold for the early misery of your married life.

Mrs. W. They have, indeed. Without you my life would have been utterly worthless. I have been too selfish, and have wanted to absorb yours too much into mine. Forgive me, child, for my selfishness and blindness. My eyes are somewhat opened. (~~*Lifts Ivy from kneeling position and kisses her.*~~)

Ivy. I must tell you of an adventure I had a few days ago, mother. I felt in a mood for horseback-riding, when it did not seem convenient for any one to go with me; so I went

down to the lot for my pony, myself, and bridled and saddled him. I rode along up the avenue, without intending to go any farther than the end of it, as you have often told me not to go as far as the turnpike. But the avenue gate was open, and I was in a brown study, so my pony took his own course, and carried me on and on, without any distinct intention on my part to be disobedient to your wishes. I did not realize that I was two miles from home, until I reached the country road, and saw an odd-looking covered wagon, standing near the fence, two horses grazing, and on further investigation, a family sitting around a camp-fire, over in the woods, on our side of the turnpike.

Mrs. W. Were they gypsies or immigrants?

Ivy. I don't know, but they were fair-haired people, and gypsies are dark, are they not? They were a young man and his wife and their child—a little creature not two years old—who was so rosy and beautiful, that I felt as though I must go nearer and have a better look at her, so I summoned courage to leave my pony tied to the fence, and went over where they were.

Mrs. W. (*horrified*). You joined a party of dirty immigrants! Oh, Ivy, I am shocked!

Ivy. But they were not dirty, mother. They were dressed poorly, but were quite clean. They had food prepare dover the fire, and while it was cooking, the mother took the child to a brook near by and washed its face and hands. You should have seen that lovely little child, mother! It was the first baby I ever saw, and you have never told me how sweet they were. It was as beautiful as the models you have taught me to draw from. When I looked at its rosebud mouth and laughing, innocent blue eyes, and thought how perfectly ignorant it was of all sin, I thought it must be very nearly akin to the angels. The mother was so proud of it, and looked so supremely happy when holding it in her arms. She kissed the child so joyfully, that I asked if I might kiss it too; and I did kiss the lovely little darling, as many times as it would let me. The man was not rough or cruel a bit to his wife, but looked very much pleased when I praised the baby.

Mrs. W. (*turning sadly away from Ivy*). Ah, me; there are some instincts it seems hard to educate people out of. I have been trying for seventeen years of my daughter's life to train all the womanhood out of her, and here she goes wild over the first little immigrant brat she sees on the highway. It is human nature, and I am afraid that it is something I

cannot change. To return to Kenneth, Ivy. You are so young, I am afraid you hardly know your own heart. You have seen so few men.

Ivy. Try me, mother! Take me out into the world among the young people, and you will see that I shall cling to Kenneth. Oh, mother, do relent and say that you do not object to him.

Mrs. W. I have not the least objection to him personally. On the contrary, the young fellow is extremely agreeable to me.

Ivy. I must kiss you for that speech mother. (*Kisses her*). And now, darling mother, may I tell Kenneth that he need not go? (*Caressing her mother*). Say yes, say yes; do say yes.

Mrs. W. Dear Child, I am thinking only of your happiness. You may tell him to stay. [*Exit Ivy*, R. D.]

[*Enter Mr. Leath with Louise on his arm, and Frank following,* L. D. *They all stand before Mrs. Wallace, and fidget and look sheepish.*]

Mrs. W. (R. C.). Why, I declare, you all look as guilty as if you had been engaged in a gunpowder plot. Brother, I know that you can never have been engaged in a conspiracy that is wrong.

Mr. L. It may be what you consider wrong, sister; but then, you have some theories that are rather against nature. Now, with all due deference to your superior intellect—

[*Enter Kenneth and Ivy, arm in arm,* R. D.]

Ken. (C.) Hurrah! Everybody congratulate us! My good mother, that is to be, has consented to our engagement —Ivy's and mine. (*Shakes Mrs. Wallace's hand.*)

Mrs. W. I said nothing about an engagement, but I said you might stay. I have changed my mind about that, however.

Ivy (*taking her other hand,* R.). You have not forgotten your promise to me mother?

Mrs. W. I have concluded that we will all go on a visit to my old friend—the mother of Louise and Kenneth. She should have something to say in the matter of an engagement between you and Ivy, Kenneth. As to *my* consent to an engagement, it will only be conditional. It must be an engagement of not less than two years, so that each of you may be certain that you know your own minds. Ivy is very young to choose, now. She is only seventeen, and must have the privilege of changing her mind. You

invited yourselves to visit us, and now we will invite ourselves to visit your mother. Then Ivy can see something of society before she becomes bound.

Louise. Our mother would be delighted to have you come.

Ivy. I care nothing for the society of any one but Kenneth and my friends, but I should like to go to know Kenneth's mother.

Frank. And I should like to know Louise's mother.

Ivy. You, too, Frank, are particularly interested in Louise's mother. I fancy that you, also, would like her for a mother-in-law.

Frank. I should like it above everything in the world if I had my mother's consent.

Mr. L. Now, sister, the gunpowder plot is out. Since you are so lenient to Ivy, I do not fear for Frank's fate.

Mrs. W. No; you need not fear. I began with a prejudice against Kenneth and Louise, because I feared they would intefere with my plans; but now I love them as my own children.

Mr. L. That speech is worthy of a woman of your superior intellect.

Mrs. W. In giving my consent to Frank's engagement, I must, however, make the same condition that I did in Ivy's case. He is only twenty years old, Louise is only eighteen, and two years from now will be time enough to marry. Under all the circumstances, you will surely think my terms very easy. I love my children too well to act the harsh mother, when I know their hearts are already lost. My game is lost.

Ivy (R. C., *taking Kenneth's hand*). And "Nature Wins."

Mrs. W.	Ivy.	Ken.	Louise.	Frank.	Mr. L.
R.	R. C.	C.	C.	L. C.	L.

Curtain.

THE END.

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